SERMON

PREACHED IN THE SCOTCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

AT QUEBEC,

THE 1ST. FEBRUARY 1804.

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PREACHED IN THE

SCOTCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

AT QUEBEC,

ON WEDNESDAY THE 1ſt. FEBRUARY, 1804,

BEING

THE DAY APPOINTED BY PROCLAMATION FOR A

GENERAL FAST.

BY THE REVD. ALEXR. SPARK.

QUEBEC:

Printed and Sold by JOHN NEILSON; No 3, Mountain-ſtreet.

1804.

ERRATA.

Page 6 *line* 4, *for* devi-vices, *read* devices.
Page 7 *line* 15, *for* perſerve, *read* perverſe.
Page 11 *line* 19, *for* delived, *read* delivered.
Page 12 *line* 14, *for* cmmon, *read* common.
Page 13 *line* 10, *for* condeſcend upon, *read* mention.
Page 15 *line* 9, *for* bleſſing, *read* bleſſings.
Page 17 *line* 12, *for* Chriſtians, *read* Chriſtians.

TO THE PUBLIC.

THE following diſcourſe, which is ſent to the Preſs at the requeſt of a few Friends, who heard it delivered, having been intended only for the Pulpit, is not recommended to the Public by any ornaments of compoſition. But the candid reader will know how to make allowance for the difference of ſtyle, generally admitted, between ſpoken and written language; and it is preſumed that, to

ſuch as are ſeriouſly intereſted in the ſubject, the compoſition will be a matter of inferior conſideration. For the Sentiments which it contains, no apology is offered.

SERMON.

ECCLESIASTES VII. 14.

In the day of proſperity be joyful, but in the day of adverſity conſider: God alſo hath ſet the one over againſt the other, to the end that man ſhould find nothing after him.

HAD mankind ſufficient confidence in the governing power and wiſdom of Providence, we ſhould not ſee them ſo much elated by proſperity as they ſometimes are, not ſo apt to complain of adverſity. Senſible of their own dependence, they would aſcribe the whole to God, who judgeth and ruleth all with infinite goodneſs: They would rejoice in his dominion, and meekly ſubmit to his will.

" IT is not in man that walketh to direct his

" ſteps," or to ſhape his own fortune in the world. " The race is not to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong." There is an inviſible agency in Providence, which over-ruleth the devivices of the wiſe, and the enterpriſes of the mighty.

It is not left in the power of men, by their own wiſdom or exertions, to ſecure to themſelves proſperity, nor to avoid the ſtroke of adverſity; neither can they judge before hand, when they ſhall enjoy the one, or ſuffer the other; but God ſendeth the one or the other, when, and in what proportion it ſeems good unto him. As expreſſed in the Text, " He hath ſet the one over againſt " the other;"—he mixeth them together, or balanceth the one with the other, in human life; " to the end that man ſhould find nothing af- " ter him;"—that we might feel our dependence on his providence, and know that it is from him, that both our proſperity and adverſity come.

At the ſame time, we are not to imagine that Divine Providence ever acts without a ſufficient cauſe

cauſe, in what it either ſends, or denies us. "As "the bird by wandering, and as the ſwallow by "flying, ſo the curſe cauſeleſs ſhall not come." When we are viſited with adverſity, it is, in the general plan of providence, intended to ſerve ſome wiſe and good end. It is meant to try our virtues, to correct our errors, or to puniſh our crimes; while it may alſo, perhaps, ſerve ſome other purpoſe more ſecret and remote, of which we cannot now judge.

THERE is no Truth more certain than this, that God doth not willingly afflict his creatures. Judgment is his ſtrange work, and he delighteth to have mercy, and to forgive. But it is the evil and perſerve nature in mankind, which requires this ſeverity. "Becauſe they regard not "the work of the Lord, neither conſider the "operation of his hands;—becauſe they are wiſe "in their own eyes, and prudent in their own "ſight;—juſtify the wicked for reward, and take "away the righteouſneſs of the righteous from "him;" becauſe "they walk after the ſight of "their own eyes, and the deſires of their own "hearts,"

" hearts," and neglect the duty which they owe to their maker;—" for all this, his anger is not " turned away, but his hand is ſtretched out " ſtill."—

When he ſeeth fit to ſend us proſperity, it is his gracious intention that we ſhould piouſly and thankfully enjoy it. But when he finds it neceſſary to viſit us with adverſity, this ought to call us to more ſerious reflection;—to make us think wherefore he contendeth with us. " In the day " of proſperity be joyful," ſaith Solomon, " but " in the day of adverſity conſider."—In the day of proſperity, we are to be joyful in the Lord, and thankful to him for what we poſſeſs: not to be " lifted up above meaſure," with our ſucceſs, as if it were effected by our own power or wiſdom; but to " joy in the God of our Salvation," and to " join trembling with our mirth." In the day of adverſity, on the other hand, we are to *conſider* wherefore it is ſent upon us;—to humble ourſelves before God, and wherein we have gone a ſtray, to " return unto him with purpoſe of heart," if happily his anger may be turned away from us.

To

To day, Chriſtians, we are called upon, by public authority, to attend upon this ſacred duty. Being, in the righteous diſpenſation of providence, viſited with the calamity of war, and beholding "the judgments of God" gone abroad "in the "earth," we are called upon to humble ourſelves before that Sovereign Power, which "ruleth in the "kingdoms of men,"—to confeſs our manifold ſins, which have incurred his diſpleaſure, beceeching him that he may be graciouſly pleaſed to avert the puniſhment they have juſtly deſerved.

At the preſent momentous criſis, which, on account of the dangers it brings to view, and the miſeries unavoidably attendant on war, may juſtly be called a "day of adverſity," it is proper for us to *conſider*, 1ſt, The danger, which threatens us as a Nation: 2ly, How much we have deſerved to be viſited with adverſity, on account of our ſins: And 3ly, what conduct we ought now to purſue, in order to give us hopes of ſafety and deliverance.

Notwithstanding the confidence we may juſtly place in the equity of Providence, that the counſels of

of the wicked ſhall not finally prevail,—it is proper that we ſhould "hear the rod, and who hath appointed it;" that we ſhould be ſenſible of the evil, which we ſuffer, regarding it as a warning ſent from God, to make us reflect upon our ways, and amend our doings.

HAPPY, beyond example, in an excellent Conſtitution of Government,—happy in the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, and in the ſecurity of our perſons and property, under the protection of equitable Laws, a wiſe adminiſtration, and a Prince, who may truly be called the Father of his People; poſſeſſing national advantages ſuperior, perhaps, to what any people ever enjoyed before,—at the preſent moment, we behold all theſe advantages ſuſpended on the hazard of war.

A turbulent and ambitious Foe, apparently raiſed up by providence as a ſcourge to the preſent age, ſtung with envy and jealouſy of that degree of national proſperity, which Heaven hath hitherto vouchafed unto us, employs all his art and energy to deprive us of theſe ineſtimable bleſſings. The avowed

avowed object of thoſe by whom the war is fomented, is to overturn all regular Government. Their aim is eſpecially directed againſt the vitals of the Britiſh Conſtitution; and it would appear, as if nothing leſs could ſatiate their pride and ambition, than the ſubverſion of the Throne.

WHAT ſon—or what ſubject of that happy and highly favoured Nation, can bear the thought of the rude attempt! Shall they who have ſo long experienced the happineſs of a Conſtitution, which is juſtly regarded as the moſt glorious monument of human wiſdom,—ſhall the ſons of thoſe Stateſmen and Heroes, by whoſe labours and blood it was raiſed and cemented;—ſhall they live to ſee the venerable Fabric humbled in the duſt? Shall the work and wiſdom of ages become the ſport of a viſionary Upſtart? May Heaven avert the direful calamity! The times in which we live are ſtrange and eventful; but we piouſly truſt that Providence hath not yet delived us over to this degree of degradation.

BUT ſhould the threatened invaſion of Britain be attempted, admitting that the Enemy fail of ſucceſs, (as

(as there is ground to hope muſt be the caſe), what carnage and devaſtation have we not to apprehend? How many lives muſt be ſacrifiſed in the conteſt? How many widows and orphans left to miſery and want?—Sad effects of lawleſs ambition!

REMOVED as we are, in this remote corner of the world, from the preſent ſcene of war, and from the immediate conſequence of the dangers, which threaten our Mother Country, our feelings ought, notwithſtanding, to be the ſame as if we were there preſent. We are equally intereſted in the event of the war; our ſafety depends on hers; and we cannot but ſympathize with thoſe, who may be expoſed to ſuffer in the cmmon cauſe.

NEITHER is it the fate of our own country alone we have to regard in this conteſt. The cauſe in which Great Britain is now engaged, is the cauſe of humanity, and of the world in general: All nations are intereſted in her ſucceſs. Were the deſigns of the Enemy to ſucceed, we might expect to ſee univerſal anarchy, or deſpotiſm, overſpread the world, and the ſcenes of Gothic barbariſm again realized:

realized: we might expect to ſee the rights of Nations, and of individuals diſregarded, religion diſcountenanced, and infidelity ſet on high. The preſent war is not merely what moſt others have been, a diſpute concerning a right to certain extent of territory. It is a conteſt between civil order and confuſion; between liberty and tyranny; between piety and infidelity. In ſhort, it involves whatever ought to be moſt dear to us, as men and as chriſtians.

We cannot condeſcend upon any of thoſe, who have ſhown themſelves real partiſans of that revolutionary Spirit, which now diſturbs the world, who have not clearly manifeſted their ſentiments reſpecting religion,—that, in their hearts, they pay no regard to it. From the Character of the men, we may therefore judge of the order of things, which they would attempt to eſtabliſh, ſhould they attain (what their ambition leads them to expect) univerſal empire.

Thus appriſed of the danger, which threatens our national Intereſts, and the happineſs of mankind in general, it is proper that we *conſider*,

2dly,

2dly, How juſtly we have deſerved to be viſited with *Adverſity*, on account of our ſins.

" WHEN the judgments of God are in the " earth, the inhabitants of the world" ought to " learn righteouſneſs " We ought thoroughly to examine our ways, and to humble ourſelves, in the ſight of the Lord, on account of our ſins, if happily his judgments may be removed, and the threatning clouds diſperſed.

THE cauſe of national calamities is generally to be aſcribed to national ſins. This is the ſentence of the Lord reſpecting the kingdom of David, as expreſſed in the 89th Pſalm, 30th verſe: " If his Children forſake my law, aud walk not " in my judgments; if they break my ſtatutes, " and keep not my commandments; then will I " viſit their tranſgreſſions with the rod, and their " iniquities with ſtripes."——Let it not be our confidence that the enemy is more unrighteous, and more deſerving of puniſhment than we. It is the way of God, in the courſe of his providence, frequently to make uſe of the more wicked, as the rod

rod of his anger, to punish the Sins of those, whom he means afterwards to deliver. Thus was Pharoah, and thus were the Chaldæans, of old, greater sinners than the Israelites whom they oppressed.

HAVING been long favoured by Heaven, with national blessings and prosperity, above all other nations of the Earth, it becomes us to *consider* how we have improved those blessing. Have we been sufficiently thankful for them? Have we valued them as we ought? or have we adopted the proper means of preserving them? Has there, in every part of the British Dominions, appeared, among all ranks, that love of order and justice,—that subordination, and prompt obedience to the Laws, which are requisite to give energy and effect to the whole system of Government? Has there been that union among ourselves, which constitutes the strength of a Nation, and, under God, is the best security against all enemies? Have all those, who have enjoyed the blessings, which Heaven hath long vouchafed to the subjects of the British Government, appeared duly sensible of their

happineſs? Or have not unreaſonable complaints ſometimes been heard, and even plots and factions formed againſt legal authority?—All theſe are matters of ſerious conſideration.—Faction and diſloyalty among ourſelves, not only diminiſh our national ſtrength, but alſo encourage our enemies with the hopes of profiting by our diſunion, and are, therefore, to be regarded as one cauſe, which may have accelerated the calamities of war.

THOUGH we have not to accuſe ourſelves perſonally with any acts of diſloyalty, it is yet matter of deep ſorrow and regret, that ſuch practices ſhould have exiſted, in any part of the dominions to which we belong: And it becomes us, on this day of humiliation, to acknowledge and bewail them before God, as ſins chargeable upon the nation, which have juſtly incurred the Divine diſpleaſure.

IT behoves us alſo to *conſider* how we have improved the benefits of the Chriſtian religion. We have the Scriptures tranſlated into our mother tongue; and every one has free acceſs to that fountain of Divine knowledge. We enjoy the pri-

privilege of public worſhip, and of the other ordinances of the Goſpel, together with every neceſſary aſſiſtance in the knowledge of our duty. What fruit have all theſe benefits produced among us? This queſtion comes home to every man's conſcience.—Can we ſay that we have acted up to the ſpirit of the Chriſtian Law, as far as we knew it, or might have known it? Or have we not to charge ourſelves with very great deficiency in this reſpect? We have to confeſs and lament before God, that there ſtill exiſt, among us, many ſinful practices, "which ought not once to be named among Chriſ-"tians."

NOTWITHSTANDING the light of the Goſpel, which we have ſo long enjoyed, and every aid for our inſtruction, it cannot be denied but that a ſpirit of infidelity is ſtill to be found among us;—that ſome appear hardened in ſin, and callous to all the admonitions of the Goſpel;—careleſs and unconcerned as to what regards religion; unawed by the proſpects of Futurity, or the terrors of Divine wrath.

ON the other hand, we may find perſons, who,

with the name of God in their mouths, and with every external appearance of ſanctity, will circumvent or defraud their neighbour, and in private practiſe the groſſeſt immoralities: men "who pro-"feſs to know God, but in works deny him, "being abominable, and diſobedient, and unto "every good work reprobate."

But where is to be found that purity of mind and manners, which the Goſpel requires? That integrity, and cordial love of goodneſs? That philanthrophy and brotherly love? Where is that unanimity and concord, which ought to diſtinguiſh the diſciples of Chriſt? Where is that unaffected piety, which, without courting the notice of men, enters into the receſſes of the ſoul, and purifies the heart and the conſcience? Where is that pure and manly zeal, which is "according to know-"ledge?"—Not a zeal for trifles, or for matters of doubtful opinion, which produceth ſtrife, "ra-"ther than Godly edifying;"—but a zeal for "the "Faith once delivered unto the Saints;"—that Faith, "which worketh by love," and which tends to promote union, virtue, and happineſs? Though we

we certainly may boaſt of many Characters, eminent both for piety and virtue; yet theſe fruits of true religion are far from being ſo general as they ought.

In matters of religion, as well as in politics, a ſpirit of innovation appears to have gone abroad in the world, which under pretence of rectifying abuſes, labours to ſubvert all eſtabliſhed order; and it is matter of regret that this ſpirit has met with too much countenance and encouragement. Chriſtians ought to know that there is nothing new to be expected in religion. But if any man would diſtinguiſh himſelf as a diſciple of Chriſt, let it be by his works. In as far as he ſhews himſelf to be a good Subject of the State, a ſincere Friend, a good Neighbour, upright, charitable, and of a holy and virtuous life,—ſo far we may give him credit for the rectitude of his principles; for, "the tree is known by its fruit;"—ſo far we may honour and eſteem him, as one who liveth under the power of Religion. But a mere profeſſion, without a correſponding conduct, is of no avail.

LET us now, 3dly, *conſider* what conduct we ought to purſue, in this time of danger and calamity, in order to give us ground to hope for ſafety and deliverance.

FIRST, and principally, being duly ſenſible of the error of our ways,—how much we have provoked God, by our ſins,—it becomes us to return unto him, by true repentance and amendment;—to walk in his fear,—to ſet his Law before our eyes,—and to cleanſe ourſelves from our iniquities. The beſt ground of ſecurity we can have, for the continuance of the bleſſings we enjoy, is to improve them, according to the intention of him, who beſtoweth them upon us.

WHEN God, of old, brought up the Iſraelites out of Egypt, "and gave them the lands of the "Heathen," it was in order "that they might "obey his ſtatutes, and keep his laws" But, when they afterwards forſook his law, and corrupted his worſhip with the idolatry of the nations, which had been before them in the Land, "he was turned to be their enemy," as ſaith the Pro-

Prophet, "and he fought againſt them:—He de-
"livered their ſtrength into captivity, and their
"glory into the Enemy's hand." Yet when they returned, and called upon him, in their trouble, "he regarded their affliction, when he
"heard their cry. He remembered for them his
"covenant, and repented according to the multi-
"tude of his mercies."

THOUGH we, in like manner, have ſinned againſt him, and have not duly improved his benefits,—yet if we return unto him, with all our hearts, before the judgment ſhall have gone forth againſt us, there is ground to hope in his mercy, that he will yet deliver us, as in times paſt. If by our repentance and amendment, we make God our Friend, we need not fear all that can riſe up againſt us. "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is
"our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will
"ſave us."

LET us baniſh and diſcountenance all faction and diſcord; and with heart and hand, unite in the common cauſe of our Country. The eyes,

and

and the expectations of all people are turned towards Great Britain. They behold, with admiration, the arduous conteſt ſhe ſuſtains; and which, we truſt, under the guidance of Providence, ſhe will be enabled to bring to a fortunate iſſue. "The "rod of the wicked ſhall not reſt upon the lot "of the righteous."—"A righteous man falling "down before the wicked, is a troubled fountain, "and a corrupt ſtream." When wicked men are exalted to dignity and power, the fountain of juſtice is corrupted, and the order of ſociety deſtroyed.—But this is a ſtate of things, which cannot be permanent. There are means in the hand of Providence to correct all abuſes of this kind; and it is found, in experience, that "The triumphing of "the wicked is ſhort, and the hope of the hypo-"crite but for a moment."

If the conteſt in which Britain is now engaged be arduous, it is alſo honourable, and glorious. Never did any nation act a part more eminent on the Theatre of the world, or more important to mankind, than that, which Providence hath, at this time, aſſigned to her. In midſt of the aſtoniſh-

ed

ed nations, ſhe ſtands forth before the haughty Foe, as the champion of religion and virtue, and the avenger of injured humanity. She appears the ſole Power, which poſſeſſes ſtrength and courage, to check the progreſs of that diſorganizing ſpirit, which threatened to overſpread the world, and to fill it with confuſion and miſery.

NEVER, ſurely, was a war more neceſſary than that in which we are now engaged, or more honourable to the ſupporters of it. Let us not, then, complain of the temporary hardſhips, which it may occaſion; nor of its continuance, ſhould it be unavoidably protracted. But let us patiently wait, until the hand of Providence interpoſe, to eſtabliſh peace and order, on a ſolid foundation.

IN the mean time, knowing that it is "righte-" ousneſs which exalteth a Nation," and that "ſin " is the reproach," and muſt finally prove the ruin, " of any people," let it be the care of every one of us, in our ſeveral departments of life, to promote and encourage order and virtue, by our influence and example. Both in our public and private

concerns, let the law of God be the rule of our conduct, and let vice of every kind be more and more diſcountenanced.

If we are really perſuaded, of what the ſcripture teacheth us, that "the battle is the Lord's," that he exalteth or depreſſeth nations, as ſeemeth good in his ſight, and that their own ſinfulneſs is that which accelerateth his judgements; hence we may alſo perceive, that every wicked man, however ſtrong his profeſſions of patriotiſm may be, muſt be regarded as an enemy to his country.

Finally: Whatever reports we may have heard of the hoſtile preparations of the enemy, let us be exhorted to truſt in the protection of Heaven, and to fear no evil. "Say to them that are "of a fearful heart be ſtrong, fear not, behold "your God will come with vengeance, even God "with a recompenſe, he will come and ſave you." If we be not wanting in our duty to God, or in the proper application of the means, which he hath put in our power, we can have no reaſon to be apprehenſive as to the final iſſue of the conteſt.

Wisdom

" WISDOM is better than weapons of war," ſaith Solomon, " but one ſinner deſtroyeth much good." This obſervation we may ſee verified in the general courſe of Providence. One perſon veſted with power, who ruſhes forward to gratify his ambition, without regard to juſtice or moderation, may, indeed " deſtroy much good," and for a time occaſion much diſtreſs and trouble in the world. But his career is of ſhort duration; and all his " weapons " of war," are finally found inſufficient to ſupport him, againſt the ſteady perſeverance of thoſe, who are guided by wiſdom and virtue.

Now, unto the Lord our God, who alone hath power to ſave and to deſtroy, be glory and dominion, henceforth and forevermore. AMEN.

FINIS.